HR Chrono

THE DIRECTOR OF
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

National Intelligence Council

22 February 1983

STAT

I have read the "Nuclear Weapons" manuscript with interest and profit. The group did a very good job indeed. However, it could be even better and my comments are attached.

Harry

Henry S. Rowen
Chairman

Att: a/s

This manuscript does a remarkable job in presenting the major facts, problems and choices before us on nuclear weapons. You all deserve congratulations. My comments below should be read as coming from an admirer of this work.

I suppose the two main respects in which the manuscript is deficient are, first, its treatment of the overall competition between the Soviet Union and the United States and, second, its failure to convey adequately the high momentum of the Soviet nuclear program in the 1970s and today.

On the global competition, its relevance is fundamental to your subject. Almost all of the differences between the two great powers center on third areas (including Europe); we have very few strictly bilateral issues between us. This being so, the occasions for conflict center on specific localities with a wide variety of policy instruments being used by both parties. No one, or hardly anyone, would argue that nuclear weapons are directly relevant to most areas in contention, but inevitably they are a part of the background for all. And in some instances, as you point out somewhere in the text, they are seen to be important not only in Europe but also in the Persian Gulf and perhaps elsewhere. I find it nearly impossible to imagine a nuclear conflict that does not begin other than through the escalation of a local one, a view that I think you share.

This proposition could be expressed as another "perplexity" in Chapter 1. Given the fact that the US and the Soviet Union have important opposed interests around the world and given the power of nuclear weapons, they are bound to play some role in the pursuit of these opposing interests by the two sides -- with all of the attendant dangers which you bring out well later. The way Chapter 1 now reads, the existence of these opposed interests is left implicit, yet if it were not for them I have little doubt that most of the problems you discuss would be much less troublesome -- as you say towards the end.

I will return to the subject of the Soviet nuclear momentum below.

Chapter 2, p.13, on the subject of civilians as targets says that it is less likely today that wars can be fought without including the people. However, for nuclear weapon states the rational incentive for excluding attacks on people is surely stronger than ever before. There are of course technical questions concerning collateral damage from military attacks, (on which more below) but you seem to assume near suicidal behavior on the part of leaders. Perhaps you would say that leaders that use nuclear weapons at all have to be crazy and, given that degree of irrationality, attacks on populations follow. Nonetheless, I come out on the other side, that population attacks are probably less likely.

On p.21 of Chapter 2 it is worth noting, in addition, the tens of millions of killings inflicted by the Soviet leadership on its own people.

In Chapter 3, p.7 (and elsewhere), you have an opportunity, which you do not seize, to condemn a launch on warning policy as dangerous in the extreme.

This chapter also provides an illustration of my point on the role of nuclear weapons in the competition around the world. On p.12, on Escalation, you do not state clearly that nuclear escalation has not merely been "a continuing concern of defense planners" but a central element of alliance strategy from the beginning. (You do say this several chapters later). It has, of course, come increasingly in question but no substitute policy has been adopted.

Chapter 4 illustrates the point that your focus on nuclear rivalry is too narrow. For instance, consider the fact that SALT II died in the Senate not because of anything "nuclear" that the Soviet leadership did but because of its invasion of Afghanistan. For an earlier example, consider the fact that the great US strategic forces buildup of the 1950s was triggered by the Korean War. In short, the discussion on p.5 of this chapter hardly does justice to the perceived importance of the general rivalry as it affects the nuclear competition.

On p.19, bottom, of this Chapter you might note that the US grossly underestimated the Soviet buildup until well into the 1970s. We did so in the belief that the Soviets would recognize that even trying to match us was a mug's game. They saw it otherwise.

On p.29 you might note that the deployment of the Soviet heavy missiles was a result of the Soviets taking pains in SALT I, with our acquiescence, to leave open this possibility. They knew they had the SS-19 coming along and we didn't. In due course these heavy missiles appeared.

The arms race discussion in Chapter 5 is sound and it requires a citation of Albert Wohlstetter's important work on this subject (published in Foreign Policy).

P.6, top, of this chapter says that there is little need to improve accuracy further. There are two important reasons to the contrary: with further accuracy improvements, yield can be reduced further with resulting reductions in collateral damage to civilians; and for some weapons, accuracy might be improved to the point where non-nuclear warheads could be substituted for nuclear ones.

There are several other places in the text where you can and should point out that trends in technology permit a reduction in collateral damage and that there is a moral argument for doing so.

On p.7 of Chapter 6 middle, you should note that land mobile launchers are not easily detected.

The discussion on page 10 of this chapter would benefit from a discussion of comparative spending on strategic forces. This has radically changed in

the past decade. By now, the Soviets are spending three times as much as we on strategic offense and defense forces. In offensive forces alone they are spending about twice as much as we.

Chapter 7 needs a clearer formulation of the role of nuclear weapons in the defense of third areas, especially Europe. See, for instance p.4, bottom, "the central concept of American nuclear strategy has been deterrence." The obvious question is "of what." The answer for the first decade or more of the nuclear era was principally "an attack in Europe". Then, to this was added "an attack on the US." But the former answer was not dropped; it just became progressivly more problematical (as the current INF debate in Europe shows). But as you suggest, but don't highlight from p.9 on, the strategy remains deterring non-nuclear attack with the first use of nuclear weapons, if necessary.

P.33, top, of this chapter offers another place to expand on the morality of limiting collateral damage to civilians.

Chapter 8, p.5 bottom, should discuss the Soviet aims of promoting "decoupling" between the US and Europe which arguably is at least as important as the Soviet concerns that you do mention.

P.19, bottom, understates the progress the Soviets are making in cruise missile technology.

P.21, end of section, suggests something that is doubtfully verifiable, constraints on SLCMs.

Chapter 9 would benefit from a new section near the beginning: "What Has Been Accomplished." I would cite, e.g. the ending of atmospheric nuclear tests (except for the Chinese), the hot line, the NPT, and several relatively minor agreements. Depending on taste, the ABM Treaty could be added. But the main problems discussed above have not been solved. In particular, SALT I etc. (the ABM excepted) did not cause any important deflection in programs, spending, etc. Such a section on past accomplishments would be useful in helping to lower expectations.

P.10, after first full paragraph, could usefully take note of the extraordinary array of missiles the Soviets now have in development. This gives us an indication of what we are likely to see deployed later in the decade.

P.13, near top, understates the difficulty for national technical means in monitoring various suggested limits on cruise missiles, reloads, and mobile missiles.

P.14, near top, is practically an apologia for Soviet use of poison gas. Do you really want to leave the text as it is?

P.19, again might point out the high ratio of Soviet to US spending.

On the whole, Chapter 9 strikes me as being pretty utopian.

Chapter 10, p.18, first full paragraph is too weak. Arguably several of the countries listed in Map/Box 2 as having the potential but that have not built nuclear weapons would have done so in the absence of US nuclear support.

Chapter 11, p.18, bottom, provides another opportunity to make the collateral damage reduction point.

P.20 bottom. Where do you come out on <u>actually</u> attacking populations? It isn't clear.

P25 bottom is a wouldbe. Technology is going to develop and the great power competition will probably continue (more or less "endlessly"). This competition needs to be channeled into less dangerous paths, e.g. ways of substituting non-nuclear for nuclear weapons; less indiscriminate nuclear ones for more discriminate; less vulnerable for more vulnerable; better controlled.

P.26, last section, could be focussed more sharply on a central problem: how is Europe to be defended (and Japan for that matter)? If, as is becoming increasingly apparent, the methods that have worked for the past nearly four decades don't have much of a future, what should be done? You may feel that this is not central enough to your subject. I believe that it is.